

These minutes have not yet been approved

BOARD OF FINANCE

Town of Essex
29 West Avenue
Essex, CT 06426
Via Remote & In Person- 7:00 p.m.
Conference Room A

MINUTES

Thursday December 16, 2021

In attendance: Keith Crehan, Mary-Louise Polo, Ethan Goller (Via Zoom), Campbell Hudson
Absent: Brian Weinstein, Vincent Pacileo II

Others in Attendance: Norman Needleman, First Selectman
James Frances, Treasurer
Tracey Celentano, Finance Director
Andrew Kressley, Essex Fire Engine Company #1 Chief
John Planas, Fire Marshall (Via Zoom)

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Keith Crehan

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

Keith Crehan moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mary-Louise Polo. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

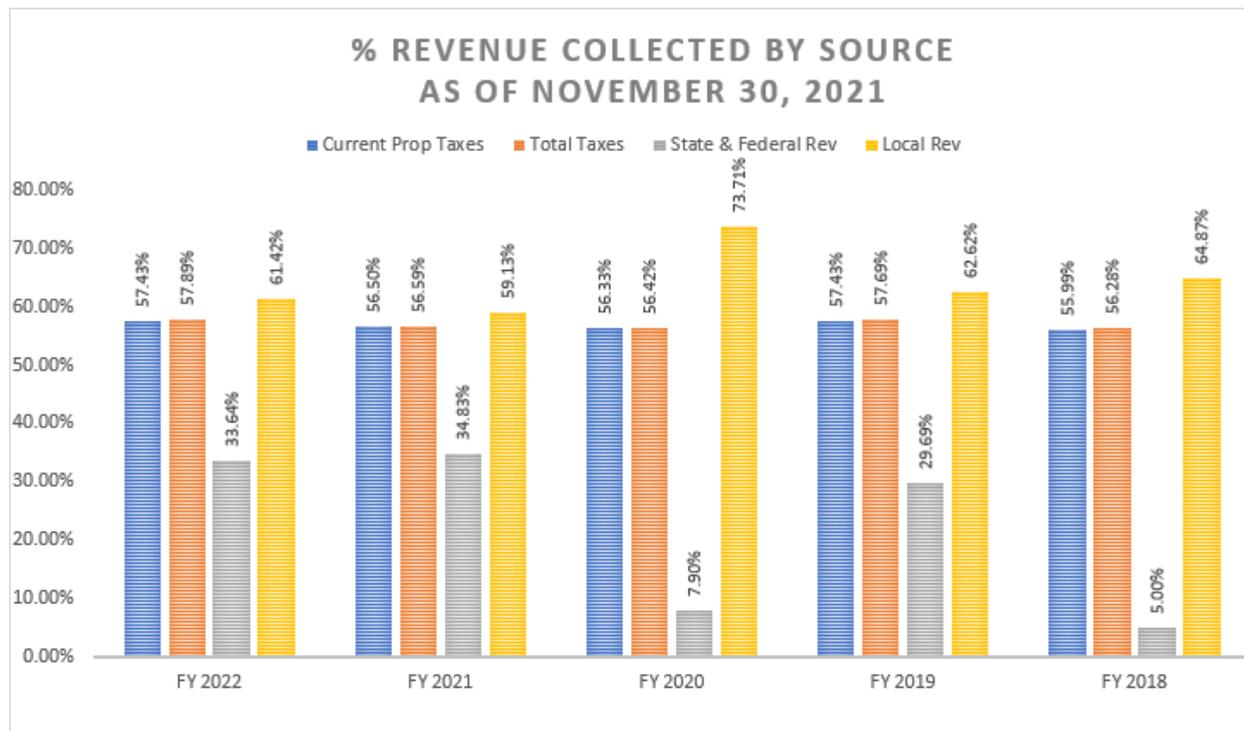
Ethan Goller made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 21, 2021 meeting, seconded by Campbell Hudson, Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

REVENUES:

Current property tax collections totaled \$166.8K for November bringing the collection rate to 57.43% which compares favorably with historical rates. Prior years' collections and interest & liens added another \$14.8K for the total tax collections for the month of \$181.6K.

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As of November month-end, the YTD total tax collections were \$14,039,639 or 57.89% of the fiscal year total compared to 56.59% as November 2020 and 56.42% as of November 2019. The Town did not receive any additional State or Federal Revenue in November and YTD revenue totaled \$170.8K or 33.64% of budget. Local revenues totaled \$121.2K in November 2021 which pushes the collection rate to 61.42% and this continues to trend well compared to historical rates. Year-to-date conveyance taxes total \$137,915 exceeding budget by \$27.9K. Total revenues collected stands at 56.84% of budget versus 55.84% for November 2020 and 55.65% for November 2019 month end. These totals reflect the budgeted deficit amount of \$290,794.

EXPENDITURES

Expenditures for the month of November totaled \$2,876,933 bringing spending YTD to 13 million or 50.68% of budget. Selectmen's budget expenditures made up \$579,492 of the total spending. As of November month-end, the Selectman's budget spending YTD is \$4,679,112 or 52.98% of budget compared to 50.84% as of November 2020 and 47.94% in November 2019 month-end. November payroll accounted for \$243.4K of the monthly spending. A deeper dive into the remaining expenditures shows typical spending for operating expenditures, normal contract payments such as CT Water, Visiting Nurses, quarterly Library payments and various was processing costs for the transfer station. Public Works department was busy completing several projects before the asphalt plants closed and we should see this reflected in December's numbers.

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Keith Crehan made a motion to accept the financial report, seconded by Mary-Louise Polo. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

SELECTMEN'S REPORT:

Norman Needleman said that there is not much to report. Chief Kressley is here from the Essex Fire Department. We have 3 different requests for ARPA funds.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Norman Needleman reports that he is working with Essex Fire Department Chief Andrew Kressley to write up the proposal so that the terminology meets the requirements for ARPA. The new rescue truck would be replacing the existing 22-year-old rescue (which is coming up on the 10-year plan). Funds would also be used to purchase a new radio system. Chief Kressley also reported that the department would be apply for a federal AFG grant in the amount of \$182,000 to replace aging air packs but would still need to take money out of the sinking fund. This would be for 42 packs, bottles and masks. He says that this was voted on unanimously and that they want to send it to the town meeting in January so that they are able to put in the purchase order before a price increase. The truck would require approximately 20 months to build.

Campbell Hudson remarked that should it be determined that the ARPA funds would not be appropriate that sinking fund would be used.

Keith Crehan made a motion to approve and recommend to Town Meeting an appropriation in an amount not to exceed \$775,000 to be allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act Funds for the purchase of a Heavy Rescue vehicle for the Essex Fire Engine Co. No. 1. Vehicle design specifications support the safety protocol of the town's first responders during COVID. Motion seconded by Campbell Hudson, passed unanimously. Motion carried.

Norman Needleman stated that the frame/undercarriage of the current Fire Marshal's vehicle is deteriorating and that it was purchased for \$7,000. Funds are being requested in order to purchase and outfit a new vehicle.

Fire Marshal John Planas stated that new regulations coming down the pipe require equipment to be separated from the passenger compartment of the vehicle. Carcinogens, etc. in gear can be harmful to the passengers.

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Keith Crehan made a motion to approve and recommend to Town Meeting an appropriation in an amount not to exceed \$85,000 to be allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act Funds for the purchase of a vehicle for the Town Fire Marshall. The Fire Marshal provides critical emergency response which has expanded significantly during COVID. Motion seconded by Mary-Louise Polo. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

Norman Needleman reported that there has been a rise in mental health issues and that Tri Town Youth Services is requesting funds from Essex, Deep River, and Chester on a per capita basis.

Keith Crehan made a motion to approve and recommend to Town Meeting an appropriation in the amount of \$39,820 to be allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act Funds for Tri Town Youth Services, a local non-profit. Said funds to be used to fund a per diem clinician to expand and support youth mental health services during COVID. Funding is contingent on the full participation of the towns of Deep River and Chester, seconded by Campbell Hudson. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

Norman Needleman reports that Thatchedbed Island (a 1.6 acre DEP/Land trust owned property) is eroding away and that removal of Phragmites caused accelerated erosion. They are working with Jeff Going to trying and piece together different grant money to save the island because it is a good barrier island, depository for dredge spoils (saves a ton of money when we dredge). The money requested would be used for permitting as well as salvaging boulders from the old fishing piers to start building the barriers. The end goal would be to build up the island so that the grasses come back and prevent erosion. Norm also reports that the Land Trust is in favor of the project.

Keith Crehan made a motion to approve a special appropriation not to exceed \$10,000 to the Town of Essex fiscal year 2021-2-22 budget line 10400-508850- Selectmen's Office- Special Appropriation Expenditures. Said funds to be used for permitting costs related to the Thatchedbed Island project, seconded by Mary-Louise Polo. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE: None

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ADJOURNMENT:

Ethan Goller made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 p.m., seconded by Keith Crehan, passed unanimously. Motion carried.

***Danielle Sanso
Recording Secretary***